

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL ON BELGRADE MEETING

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL FROM JANUARY 24, 1978 NEW YORK TIMES
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

BEGIN TEXT.

A BELGRADE BALANCE SHEET

QUIETLY AS THE SNOWS, THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE RESUMED
WORK LAST WEEK AFTER A MONTH'S RECESS. ITS TASK IS TO
REVIEW THE 1975 HELSINKI ACCORDS ON "SECURITY AND COOPERA-
TION IN EUROPE" -- THE TERMS OF DETENTE BY WHICH A LONG-
DIVIDED CONTINENT IS TRYING TO LIVE TOGETHER AND GROW
CLOSER AGAIN.

THE CONFERENCE IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC, AND REPORTERS
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OUTSIDE THE GATES HAVE FOUND LITTLE NEWS IN THE DIM SOUNDS
OF BATTLE ECHOED BY DELEGATION SPOKESMEN. INDEED, THE PRO-
CEEDINGS HAVE BEEN DECEPTIVELY MONOTONOUS FROM THE
BEGINNING, IN EARLY OCTOBER. TIME AND AGAIN, THE UNITED
STATES, ITS ALLIES AND EVEN SOME EUROPEAN NEUTRALS HAVE

TAKEN THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS TO TASK FOR VIOLATIONS OF

THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS OF THE HELSINKI ACCORDS. THE COMMUNISTS, IN TURN, HAVE TRIED TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, OFFERED A FEW PERFUNCTORY COUNTERCHARGES OR MERELY KEPT SILENT.

HAD THE CONFERENCE BEEN PUBLIC, THE RUSSIANS MIGHT WELL HAVE WALKED OUT LONG AGO. THEIR EMBARRASSMENT UNDER SUCH A WESTERN BARRAGE HAS SURELY BEEN GREAT. MOREOVER, THE PUBLICS OF EASTERN EUROPE HAVE LEARNED A GOOD DEAL ABOUT THE CONFERENCE FROM THE BROADCASTS OF THE VOICE OF AMERICA, RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERTY. (THAT THE YUGOSLAVS ACCREDITED CORRESPONDENTS FROM THE LATTER TWO RADIOS ITSELF CAUSED MOSCOW NO LITTLE DISTRESS). THE APPROACH OF THE CONFERENCE HAD BEEN USED FOR MORE THAN A YEAR BY HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES THROUGHOUT THE SOVIET ORBIT TO GIVE INTERNATIONAL STANDING TO THEIR ALLEGATIONS OF VIOLATIONS BY THEIR OWN REGIMES. THESE ALLEGATIONS HAVE NOW BEEN AMPLIFIED IN WESTERN STATEMENTS AT BELGRADE. AND PROTESTS MADE AFTER THE BELGRADE MEETING WILL BE GRIST FOR THE NEXT REVIEW TWO YEARS HENCE, PROBABLY IN MADRID.

TWO OF THE FIVE NONGOVERNMENTAL AMERICAN DELEGATES HAVE COMPLAINED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS PULLING ITS PUNCHES TO PROTECT RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW ON OTHER ISSUES, AND THAT AMERICAN STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN Milder THAN THOSE OF SOME WESTERN EUROPEANS. NOT A SINGLE POLITICAL PRISONER HAS UNCLASSIFIED

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BEEN FREED BY THE BELGRADE PROCESS, THEY SAY. BUT THEY MISS THE POINT. BELGRADE'S SUCCESS MUST BE JUDGED NOT ONLY IN PRISONERS FREED BUT ALSO IN PRISONERS NOT TAKEN BECAUSE OF THE DAMAGING PUBLICITY NOW ASSURED FOR MOST CASES. AND IF THE ALLIES WHO FIRST OBJECTED TO THE HARM TO DETENTE IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ARE NOW WILLING TO SPEAK MORE BLUNTLY THAN WASHINGTON AT BELGRADE, THAT SHOULD BE RECKONED AS DESIRABLE, NOT DEPLORABLE.

THE BELGRADE PROCESS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. ALTHOUGH FEW FULLY REALIZED IT TWO YEARS AGO, THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT WAS A DEEPLY SUBVERSIVE DOCUMENT. IT MADE THE BEHAVIOR OF GOVERNMENTS TOWARD THEIR OWN CITIZENS A MATTER OF LEGITIMATE INTERNATIONAL CONCERN AND REVIEW. IT DID NOT, HOWEVER, GIVE THE WEST THE POWER TO DRAG MOSCOW TO THE BIENNIAL REVIEW. THAT IS WHY BELGRADE HAS HAD TO BE AN EXERCISE IN DIPLOMACY AS WELL AS INDICTMENT.

STILL PENDING IN BELGRADE IS A FINAL STATEMENT. THE WEST WANTS A DETAILED LIST OF VIOLATIONS OF THE HELSINKI ACCORD AND PLEDGES OF BETTER PERFORMANCE. MOSCOW WANTS A BLAND

STATEMENT THAT EMPHASIZES SECURITY AND MINIMIZES HUMAN RIGHTS, AND CERTAINLY NO NAMING OF VIOLATORS OR VIOLATIONS THEREOF. BECAUSE CONSENSUS IS MANDATORY, THE INEVITABLE COMPROMISE WILL BE NEARER MOSCOW'S DESIRE. BUT EVERY GOVERNMENT WILL BE FREE TO RENDER ITS OWN ACCOUNT. WASHINGTON'S SHOULD SHOW A POSITIVE BALANCE, A SUCCESS FOR THE WEST AND FOR ARTHUR GOLDBERG, THE OUTSPOKEN CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN DELEGATION.

END TEXT.

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